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News

For Immediate Release
April 11, 2006

USDA PROVIDES MORE THAN \$3 MILLION TO PROTECT VERMONT'S FARM LANDS

*Colchester.....*State Conservationist Judy Doerner today announced the availability of more than \$3 million to protect agricultural land in Vermont through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in fiscal year 2006.

"Preserving Vermont's prime agricultural farm lands helps to ensure a vibrant future for Vermont's agriculture," said Doerner. "Once protected by conservation easements, this land will be shielded from development pressure.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking proposals from state and local governments and non-governmental organizations interested in working together to acquire conservation easements on farms. ***The NRCS State Office must receive proposals by 5:00 p.m. EDT on May 11, 2006.*** NRCS is expected to announce final project selections in June. Requests for Proposals can be found at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/pdf_files/FRPP_RFP06_05-11-06.pdf

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FRPP protects productive agricultural land by purchasing conservation easements to limit conversion of farm lands to non-agricultural uses. USDA partners with State or local governments and non-government organizations to acquire conservation easements from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement in this voluntary program. State and local entities can match that amount, including the use of landowner donations.

Eligible farms must have the following components:

- contain productive soils or historic or archaeological sites;
- be part of a pending offer from a non-governmental organization, state, or local farmland protection program;
- be privately owned;
- covered by a conservation plan;
- large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- accessible to markets for what the land produces; and
- surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

For more information contact Dave Hoyt, assistant state conservationist, Vermont State Office, 356 Mountain View Drive, Colchester, VT 05446; (802) 951-7695 or e-mail, David.Hoyt@vt.usda.gov.

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